



Long Exposure:
**The Camera at
Udaipur, 1857-1957**

Selections from the Pictorial Archives of the
Maharanas of Mewar

Digitized by Sarayu Foundation Trust, Delhi and eGangotri
The presence of the camera in Udaipur predates the arrival of photography in India in 1840. The *camera obscura*, an optical device and a predecessor to the modern day camera, is known to have been used in Udaipur as early as 1818. Captain James Tod (later Colonel), the intrepid British political agent at the Court of Mewar explained its functions to amuse the ailing heir-apparent Prince Amar Singh, the older son of Maharana Bhim Singh (1768 – 1828).

The Pictorial Archives of the Maharanas of Mewar are comprised of photographic materials ranging from glass-plate negatives, card photographs, photomontages, and painted photographs. Printing processes like albumen, platinum and gelatin silver extending from the mid 19th to the early 20th centuries are well represented. The collection also includes cameras and other photographic equipment from this period. Photographs in a variety of evolving technologies continue to be added to the Archives on a regular basis, extending the scope of the collection to the contemporary digital age.

This exhibition provides a photographic overview of the reign of five successive Maharanas of Mewar at Udaipur captured through the lingering gaze of the camera. The earliest images in the Archives can be dated to the reign of Maharana Swaroop Singh (b. 1815, r. 1842 – 1861), although there are none of the ruler himself. The first known photographs of a Maharana are of his successor, Maharana Shambu Singh (b. 1847, r. 1861 – 1874). The initial exhibits are thus portraits of the Maharanas and their court functionaries, often in the *carte-de-visite* format, the most prevalent form of mass photography at the time.

By the time Maharana Sajjan Singh (b. 1859, r. 1874 – 1884) came to the throne, photography as a discipline provided several alternative formats and media, with a wide range of presentation options. This enthusiastic patron of photography died tragically young, leaving behind a rich legacy of photographs, with the largest group of portraits in the Archives across different sizes being from his brief reign.

The photographic chronicles of Maharana Fateh Singh's (b. 1848, r. 1884 – 1930) long reign of forty-five years provide insights into his exemplary rule. His great reluctance to be seen at gatherings orchestrated by the British did not come in the way of his extending every courtesy to his guests, and the many State Visits that Udaipur hosted stand testimony to this. All his photographs exude this graciousness, as well as his personal dignity and rectitude.

Maharana Bhupal Singh (b. 1884, r. 1930 – 1955), the first natural-born heir-apparent in several generations, was extensively photographed from his infancy and onwards. One of the first rulers in princely India to accede to independent India, photographs from his reign show him in close contact with people, demonstrating the change in the visual depiction of a ruler, from a distant leader to a more approachable figure.

Photographs from the post 1947 period show Maharana Bhagwat Singh (b. 1921 – 1984) with leaders of independent India, and his active endeavour to keep the development of Mewar in focus within the Indian Union.

Providing the setting for the numerous images seen here is the unique topography of Udaipur. Its network of lakes, pleasure pavilions and palaces dotting the landscape has always stimulated the imagination, of residents and visitors alike. It is this much-photographed 'image' along with Mewar's singular history as exemplified in this exhibition that add to a visitor's experience.



Albumen print c. 1880, 264x213 mm, 2008.06.0219x

Johnston & Hoffmann, India

Maharana Sajjan Singh



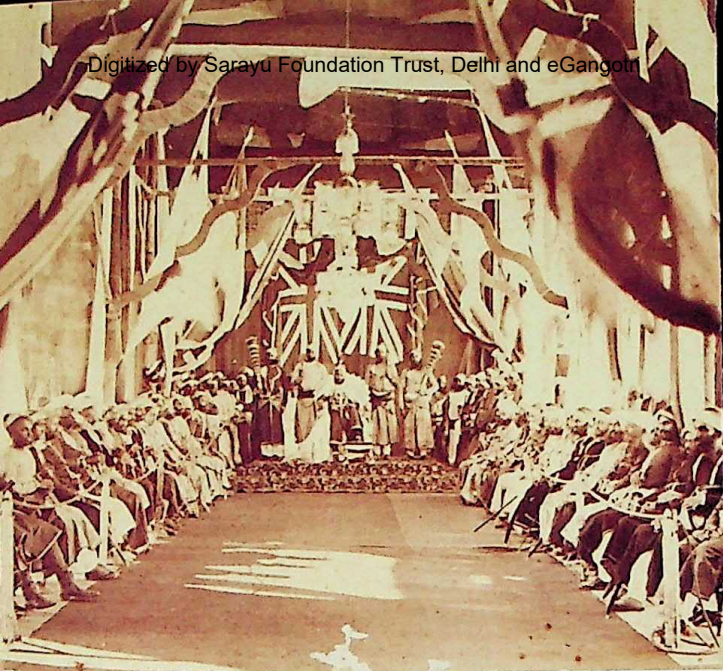
Albumen print on *carte-de-visite*, c. 1860, 98x56 mm, 2008.01.0205

Hurrychund Chintamon, Bombay

Rawat Bagat Singh of Bedla (detail)

Maharana Swarup Singh famously sheltered a group of British refugees at the island of Jag Mandir during the uprising of 1857. For his role in escorting the fleeing families from Nimach to Udaipur under the Maharana's orders, *Rawat Bagat Singh* of Bedla was gifted a sword of honour. He was titled 'Rao Bahadur' at the Delhi Imperial Assemblage of 1877, and awarded the CSI a year later. In this *carte-de-visite*, he has been photographed wearing the formal court attire of the period, and more interestingly, what are clearly European-style

CC-0. Public Domain. UP State Museum, Hazratganj. Lucknow



Albumen print, 24th November, 1881, 214x271 mm, 2008.06.0231viii

Johnston & Hoffmann, India

Maharana Sajjan Singh in durbar, Chittor

The historic fort of Chittor (the former capital of Mewar) has always been a symbol of Rajput resilience in the face of impossible odds. The occasion of it being 'restored' to the people of Mewar was a significant moment. The photographer seems to have ensured symmetry by cordoning in place the nobles on both sides of the Maharana.



Gelatin silver print (reprint from original glass plate negative), c. 1920, 125x294 mm, 2008.06.0395i

Unknown photographer

Prince Albert Victor and Maharana Fateh Singh at left; young Maharaj Kumar Bhupal Singh on a chair at right, Mor Chowk, City Palace, Udaipur, 1890 (detail)

In the absence of paintings documenting foreign visitors to Udaipur during the reign of Maharana Fateh Singh, their only trace exists in these rare photographs. This image is also special as it is thus far one of only two instances in the Archives where the Maharana appears in the same frame as his son, Maharaj Kumar Bhupal Singh.



Gelatin silver print, c. 1935, 213x293 mm 2008.08.0116iii

Royal Photographic Co., Delhi

Maharana Bhupal Singh in a 1930/31 Rolls Royce

The 1930/1931 Rolls Royce in this photograph remains with the Palace and is part of the Vintage and Classic Car Collection, currently on display at the Garden Hotel.

Details: 1930/1931 Rolls Royce, 20/25 H. P. Coach builder: Hooper. Coach work: Tourer. Chassis no. GNS11. Reg. No. RJY3

This exhibition has been made possible with the loan of photographic material from the Pictorial Archives of the Maharanas of Mewar. We thank Shriji Arvind Singh Mewar for his generous support and encouragement.

Exhibition Team

Curator: Pramod Kumar KG

Curatorial Assistant: Mrinalini Venkateswaran

Photographic Material Conservator: S. Girikumar

Restoration & Interiors: Dr. Shikha Jain, DRONAH & Arvind Mathur

Risk Assessment: Rohit Jigyasu & Associates

Lighting: Manav Bhargava & Mandala

Graphics: Shreya Sarda Design

Frames: Jagdish Chandra Kumawat & team

Special thanks and acknowledgements

City Palace Museum Administration

Chief Administrator: Bhupendra Singh Auwa

Janak Singh Chauhan, Tarun Sukhwai,

Punraj Singh, Jugnu Varma & MMCF Staff

Eternal Mewar Projects: Dr. Mayank Gupta

MMCF Projects Department: Col. D. B. Acharya & team

Media Design & Printing Centre: Prince Kazmi & team

Media Office: Lokesh Mansukhani & team

Venue: The Bhagwat Prakash Gallery, Zenana Mahal,
City Palace, Udaipur

Cover image

Albumen print on *carte-de-visite*, c.1875, 98x58 mm, 2008.01.0104

Unknown photographer

Possibly Mohan Lal Photographer or Seth Kanak Mal

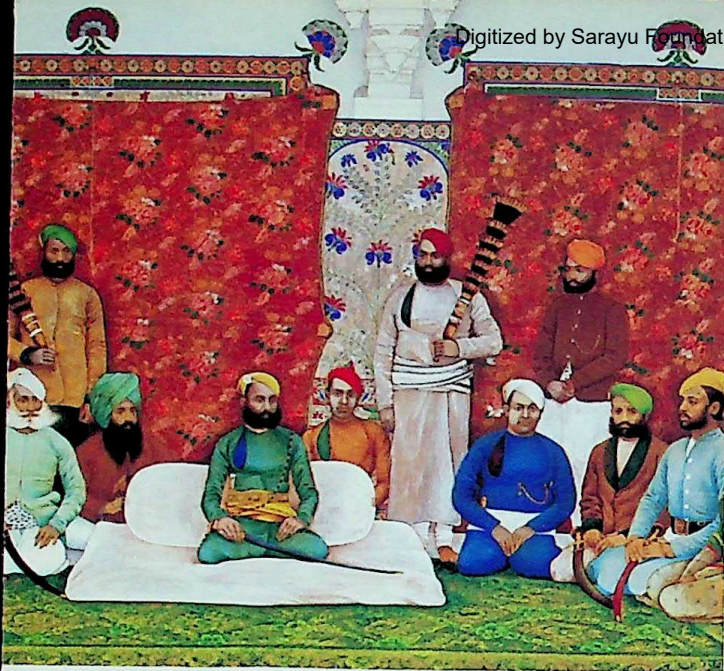
All images courtesy Pictorial Archives of the Maharanas of Mewar



MAHARANA OF MEWAR CHARITABLE FOUNDATION
The City Palace Complex, Udaipur 313001, Rajasthan, India



Eternal Mewar
Custodianship unbroken
since 734 AD



Albumen print, hand coloured, 1884-1890, 242x303 mm, 2008.06.0470

Johnston & Hoffmann, India (attrib.) (Photographer)
Pannalal Parasuram Gaud (Artist)
Maharana Fateh Singh in durbar at the Mor Chowk, City Palace, Udaipur
(detail)

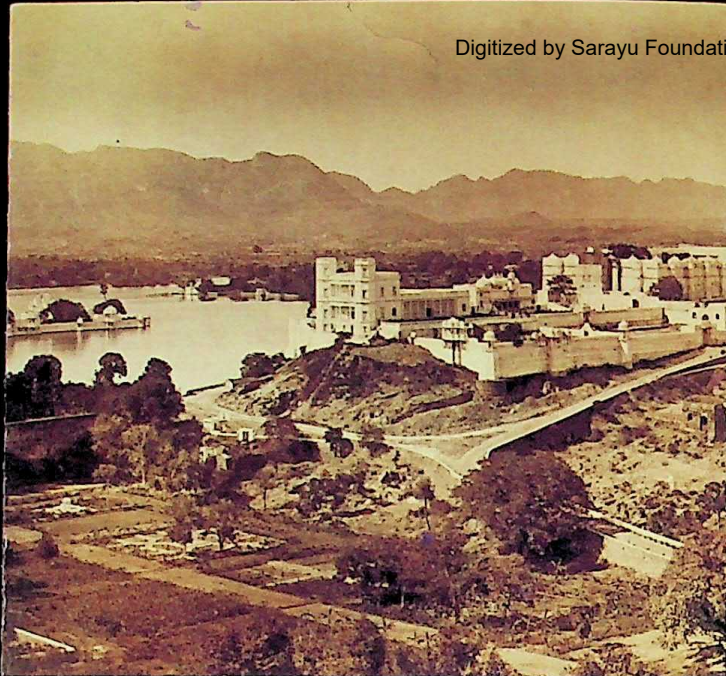


Albumen print, c. 1890, 218x284 mm, 2008.06.0275v

S. H. Meer Sahib, Udaipur
Nobles in armour at *mohalla* durbar

The phenomenal popularity of the painted photograph is aptly conveyed through this exhibit. Every detail of the photograph has been filled in during the painting process.

This group photograph of four Mewari nobles was likely to have been taken after the annual *Dussehra* festival, when a procession to Mohalla Magri (near present-day Shastri Circle, Udaipur) was followed by a durbar. The Maharana, the nobility, and the Mewar armed forces traditionally wore full armour for the occasion.



Albumen print, c. 1880, 208x271 mm, 2008.06.0106ii

Unknown Photographer

Southern façade of the City Palace complex, Udaipur

Challenging our recognition of the area today, this image shows the southern end of the City Palace complex before the crescent-shaped Shiv Niwas Palace was built. In addition to being a valuable record of the architectural history of the complex, it also tells us something of the way in which it was built, by incorporating the natural contours of the land.



Gelatin silver print, 15th August, 1956, 256x206 mm 2008.06.0476

Unknown photographer

Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, Maharana Bhagwat Singh, Sanjay, Rajiv and Indira Gandhi, Red Fort (Delhi)

In the days of conflict with the Mughals, the Maharanas of Mewar took a vow that they would never set foot in Delhi until it was ruled by an Indian. Post 1947, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru invited Maharana Bhagwat Singh to New Delhi to attend Independence Day celebrations, and redeem this pledge.